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29 April 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT : Approval of Extension of Project CORONA

1. You will remember that, following a review of the SENTRY and CORONA Programs last fall and a series of conferences in December and January, agreement was reached among the interested agencies that it would be desirable to extend the Thor-boosted satellite reconnaissance program through the summer of 1960. A recommendation to this effect, which included an outline of the funding proposed for the extension of the program, was addressed by the Under Secretary of the Air Force to the Deputy Secretary of Defense on 11 February and was subsequently approved by the latter. This paper served as the basis for a fuller memorandum (COR-0372) which set forth the same proposal against the background of a review of CORONA. With the concurrence of the senior officers concerned, this memorandum was presented to higher authority and approval granted for the proposed extension on the terms therein set forth.

2. The proposal thus favorably acted upon requested (without recommendation) an immediate decision as to whether an effort should be made to preserve the security surrounding the CORONA Project and to maintain its cover so as to deny the true purpose of the 1960 flights as well as those scheduled for 1959. Although not stated in writing it was understood that the decision on this point might have a bearing on administrative arrangements since the decision to preserve security and cover would presumably imply the continuation of present organizational arrangements and of the present distribution of responsibility. Subsequent to the rendering of the basic decision referred to above the question of security was further considered and the decision was made to embark on the extended program with every effort and intent to conduct it in the same manner as CORONA but to review the status of security and cover in approximately six months' time. It was contemplated that if security had deteriorated, or if there had

OSD REVIEW COMPLETED

NRO review(s) completed.

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been a change of political policy, the decision could then be made to surface the program but that in the meanwhile security precautions should be observed and planning should be on the assumption that the security status of the program would remain unchanged through the 1960 series.

3. Therefore, it is assumed, in accordance with the above decisions, that:

- a. Appropriate action is proceeding to schedule the four flights restored to the calendar year 1959 program and the eight flights proposed for calendar year 1960.
- b. The Central Intelligence Agency will initiate procurement of additional payloads as needed.
- c. Funding will be provided in accordance with the proposal as submitted and approved.
- d. Organizational arrangements and the distribution of responsibilities for the program will for the present remain unchanged.

It is understood that the security and cover status of the program and related organizational arrangements may be reviewed at a later date.

(sgd) Richard M. Bissell, Jr.

Attachment:

Cy 4 of COR-0372

RICHARD M. BISSELL, JR.

Deputy Director
(Plans)

cc: Director, ARPA
w/cy 5 attachment.

DD/P:RMB:djm
1-Addressee w/att.
2-Dir. ARPA w/att via Col. Geary
3-USAF-Col. Geary for coordination w/Gen.
Smart & Mr. Horner
4-DD/P - CIA
5-AC/DP - CIA
6-DD/P Chrono
7-DCI

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